

The Shade of a Family Tree: Narrative Reflections of the Lives of My Ancestors

An Honors Creative Project

by

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Abstract

This creative project was written to discover more about my heritage, background, and to discover some of the people, situations, and influences that have contributed to making me who I am today. As a person transitioning to adulthood part of the goal of this piece was to explore the lives of those who came before me and use their influence and experiences to help me determine my path. The research for this creative project was approached through the use of compounded genealogical research conducted through Ancestry.com, a genealogical research database in which archived public records, personal photos shared by members, and stories can be shared. It is where I made connections to several ancestors who lived centuries ago. Additionally, much of my research occurred through personal discussions and conversations had with living or previously living family members. Finally, much of the research occurred through the observation of my family, and spending time listening to conversations throughout the 22 years of my life. This project yielded some surprising relationships and connections to ancestors who I never would have expected to be part of my family tree. While allowing me to share my personal insight on the lives of my ancestors as an outside, objective viewer who never had the chance to meet some of them or experience events that occurred in their lives, I share their blood and genes and also my perspective and ideas about what potentially occurred in their lives. History as we know it is a series of stories compiled together in the most sensible order with those completing the research defining the facts. Much of what is written following is a series of stories and narratives reflecting my research into my ancestral roots.

Acknowledgments

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Additionally, I would like to thank Shelby Merder for sharing a project that she was completing in one of her classes with me and inspiring me to look deeper into my own roots by exploring my family tree.

To my grandparents and great-grandparents who I had and continue to have the privilege of knowing, thank you for all of your stories past, present, and future. Nothing shines a light on the past like those who had the opportunity to experience it.

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Not every person is lucky enough to live close to his or her grandparents or have close relationships. I am grateful that I have had the chance to make wonderful memories and share stories with each of you.

MeMaw, even though you passed during the creation of this compilation and project, you were an incredibly integral part in helping me to learn more about the generations who you knew, including uncovering a family secret that I would have otherwise falsely represented in this project. Thank you for helping to shape me into who I am today and for giving me the greatest mother I could have ever asked for. You are gone, but never forgotten, so I dedicate this project to you. May your life and memory live on as long as the words on this page last.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents and sister for supporting me throughout this endeavor not only financially through my enrollment on genealogy websites, but also emotionally during my times of frustration when the research was not giving me the answers I was seeking or I was facing a writer's block. Thank you all for instilling in me the values of hard work and perseverance, and for bringing me up in a family whose actions, values, and beliefs planted the seeds of the trees that today provide me shade.

